

# News Release

## *National Wildlife Refuge System*



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### **Three Arch Rocks Refuge Celebrates Centennial**

On October 14, 2007, Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge – the first national wildlife refuge established west of the Mississippi River – will turn 100 years old. A full century after formal protection, Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge, located ½ mile off Oceanside on the northern Oregon coast, provides habitat for Oregon's largest breeding colonies of Tufted Puffins and Common Murre. This refuge is one of the smallest designated Wilderness Areas in the country, providing 15 acres of coastal island habitat for over 100,000 nesting seabirds. It is also the northernmost pupping site of the federally threatened Steller Sea Lion. Other seabird species breeding on this refuge include Common Murre, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Brandt's Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Pelagic Cormorant, Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin's Auklet, Pigeon Guillemot Western Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull and Black Oystercatcher.

The need to designate Three Arch Rocks as a protected wildlife area was brought to the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt by two pioneer naturalists and conservationists from Oregon, William L. Finley and Herman Bohlman. Because of their perseverance and dedication to wildlife conservation, Three Arch Rocks became the first refuge west of the Mississippi River. Far-sighted citizens and leaders including President Theodore Roosevelt and Oregon's William L. Finley nurtured the seeds of conservation and acted on the belief that America's wildlife heritage should be protected. In 1903, Roosevelt established the first national wildlife refuge at Pelican Island, Florida and by October 1907 he had designated the first Pacific Coast refuge at Three Arch Rocks.

William L. Finley and his childhood friend, Herman Bohlman, first visited the wind and sea-swept rocks in June of 1901 and 1903 to photograph its unique wildlife. During the first expedition they witnessed a tugboat filled with target shooters circling the rocks blasting seabirds for sport every Sunday, throughout the week they further witnessed other boats carrying gunners who were shooting Steller Sea Lions for their skins and oil. Finley wrote, "The beaches at Oceanside were littered with dead birds following the Sunday carnage." They knew they had to put a stop to this slaughter as the seabird and seal colonies could not survive much longer. Bad weather conditions prevented them from getting good photographs of the wildlife on the first trip but a second trip in 1903 proved successful.

After waiting out 19 days of storms, heavy fog and tumultuous seas on the desolate Oceanside beach, a fair weather day greeted them. They loaded up a dory with food, a tent, water, clothing and photographic equipment and rowed toward the rocks. Shag rock was the only rock with a landing spot and the men unloaded their equipment. The exhausted men spent a sleepless first night as the campsite, high on a small rocky bluff, was not only cramped but noisy. Waves blasted through the rocks' arches thundering like cannons and tens of thousands of seabirds called throughout the night. Finley wrote that "We awoke the next morning feeling as if we had spent the night on top of a broken picket fence." They lived on Shag Rock for two weeks during which time they took some of the first photographs of nesting seabirds, collected eggs and specimens for study, and documented some of the life history of the birds.

Finley had already heard about President Theodore Roosevelt's desire to protect habitat for species conservation, and a few months after the Three Arch Rocks visit he traveled across the country to Washington, D.C. for a personal audience with the President. Finley spread the photographs of the wild animals of the Pacific Coast on a table in front of Roosevelt who found the photos so compelling, he exclaimed, "Bully bully, we'll make a sanctuary out of Three Arch Rocks." But Finley's job was not over, he had to lobby four years until the President designated Three Arch Rocks as the first National Wildlife Refuge west of the Mississippi River on October 14, 1907. During that time, Finley and Bohlman worked with the Oregon Audubon Society (now Portland Audubon Society) to establish the State Model Bird Law that outlawed the sport hunting of all seabirds. Armed with the new law, the Oregon Game Warden for the Tillamook area confronted the owner of the tugboat *Vosberg* and mercilessly put an end to the shooting parties.

Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge can best be viewed from the mainland at Cape Meares and from Oceanside Beach in the community of Oceanside. To prevent disturbance to extremely sensitive seabirds, Three Arch Rocks Refuge is closed to public entry year-round and waters within 500 feet of the refuge are closed to all watercraft from May 1st through September 15th.

To mark this special occasion, Rogue Ales of Newport teamed up with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to offer a limited bottling of a special commemorative brew "Puffin Pale Ale." The 22-ounce bottles, which sport a custom label portraying the refuge and a tufted puffin and telling the refuge story, went on sale in July and will continue through October. Rogue Ales will donate a portion of the profits from the sale of the brew to the refuge's environmental education program.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.